

God truthfully. This same Paul in Hebrews 1:3 says, speaking of Christ Jesus “Who being the brightness of His [that is, God’s] glory, and the express image of His person”. Did not Jesus also say to Philip in John 14:9, “He that has seen Me, has seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” In and with Jesus Christ we are given the only and true picture of God as He truly and wonderfully is! The second commandment, you can say, is really God determining that all the floodlights of our attention must be on God as He is and as He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus! The second commandment is God righteously demanding that we glory only in God as revealed in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners. Any image we come up with minimizes God always, and takes away from Christ Jesus always. And this God will not allow and can never accept, not just for Who He is, but on account of His love towards sinners like you and me, and His goodwill towards us in and through Christ Jesus.

Do you see with me something of the wonderful second commandment, thinking not only of how it brings out God’s greatness, but consider too how it brings out God’s grace.

If you think of the second commandment and about worshipping God as only He prescribes, and especially in and through Christ Jesus alone, immediately what comes out is how this commandment tells so much of the grace of God. To see this we need to think about all the gross transgression and also of the sins not intended against this second commandment. In the history of Israel, and in the history of the church and this world, how much false worship has been and still is directed to God! How much religion even in Christian circles is more based on man’s ideas and imaginations as to how to worship God rather than as He Himself has prescribed. Think of the Israelites even as they were being given the commandments, grossly violating this second commandment with their worship around the golden calf that Aaron had made at their insistence. Think of all the false worship in the way of using images and saints and Mary, and the crucifix, and you name it, to worship God!

It seems mankind is always trying to come up with different and additional ways to represent God and to have more meaningful worship by means of helps and images of our own making. Listen again next time for one of the novel ways recently come up with by some. Amen.

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January 22, 2006

Publication No. 242

BANNER OF TRUTH RADIO BROADCAST

Radio Ministry of the FREE REFORMED CHURCHES of North America

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee that it may be displayed because of the truth. (Psalm 60:4)



THE SECOND COMMANDMENT [1]

We are in a series of messages on the Ten Commandments of God given in the Bible, found both in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. The purpose of our study is especially to think about how Christians are called to live in accordance with God’s law. When Jesus saves a person, He doesn’t only deliver from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also from the way of sin. By His Word and Spirit, God leads His people in the way of godliness and holiness and true love to God and our neighbour. Those whom the Lord justifies, He also sanctifies. You can’t call Jesus Saviour if you won’t also acknowledge Him as Lord of your life. Ralph Erskine, from some centuries back, once expressed this gospel truth in a sonnet of 386 verses! Listen here to just two of those four line verses.

When once the fiery law of God
Has chased me down the gospel road;
Then back unto the holy law
Most kindly gospel-grace will draw.

When by the law to grace I’m school’d;
Grace by the law will have me rul’d;
Hence, if I don’t the law obey,
I cannot keep the gospel-way.

In a time of increasing lawlessness in our world, and in a day when the Ten Commandments are no longer well known and when even confessing Christians question God’s laws, it is very important and good for us to consider God’s holy and unchanging law. May God use this series that by His Holy Spirit the Ten Commandments written by God on stone tablets and written in Scripture by the Holy Spirit may also be written on our hearts and lived out in our lives in the way of true Christian grace and faith and love and praise.

The last two messages were on the first commandment, this one and the next are on the second commandment of God. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven [carved] image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the

children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments." [Exodus 20:4-6]

We should notice immediately that the first and second commandments are closely related, but yet not the same. In the first one God says, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*", speaking of Who alone is to be worshipped, and now in the second, God commands us how He is to be worshipped and how not. In our worship of Him, the Lord says as it were, 'You shall not make or fashion for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything in worshipping and serving Me.' The first commandment focuses on Who alone we are to worship and the second one on how alone we are to worship. God as the only true God has all the right to demand we worship only Him, and God as Holy God has all the right to command how we worship Him. Do you believe this? The Bible tells in different places what sin we commit when we do not and will not worship God as He tells us to do, but worship Him instead according to our own thinking and imagination. If you care about true religion you know the importance of worshipping God Triune only, and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, as God instructs us to do.

In promotion and for encouragement in the way of living by also this second holy commandment of God, our theme is now, "The wonderful second commandment!" My aim is to show that it is indeed very wonderful, thinking of how it brings out the greatness of God, the grace of God, the guidance of God, and the goal of God.

Do you see with me how this second commandment proclaims the greatness of God? Consider how God insists in this law that in no way is He to be worshipped and adored by means of any image or object that you and I might come up with or imagine to be a good thing. And notice how in the commandment God goes out of His way to state that no image should be made or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. In other words, from anything at all in all the universe don't make some image of Me in worship, for that image, whatever it be, will not measure up in any way to Who I am! What God is saying here is that any image you and I should come up with from anything in this whole universe would be a gross misrepresentation of God and a discredit to His being and His glory.

To drive this home, think of the following illustration. Imagine a parent having a daughter that is engaged. The parents want to show someone else what their future son-in-law looks like and who he is...and they pull out a picture of their dog. How offensive that would be to speak of their future son-in-law that way and to represent him in that way. That seems a bit extreme, you say, but the fact is, the nicest and best image of God that you and I might come up with would still be far below what God all truly is! You see, the truth is, God is so great and glorious that nothing in the whole

universe can ever truly picture and represent Him. He is incomparable, and unrepresentable by anything or anyone in this whole universe. God is just so great, and infinitely glorious, and wholly other, and above and beyond all our best and greatest imaginations!

It is most important that we understand this and be gripped with this truth. In Isaiah 40:18 and 25 we read these words of God, "*To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare to Him?...To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal?*" says the Holy One." These verses are saying, the moment you seek to represent God with something and anything or anyone of this universe, you fail to recognize His supreme distinctness and infinite glory above all. And you somehow, even with the best of intentions, bring God down, and degrade Him, and bring offense to Him. Who likes to be misrepresented especially in a way of being downgraded and made so much less than you really are? God's motive with this holy law, however, is not just that He is a jealous God for His own honour, rightly so, but He is a loving God Who would have us truly to know Him and enjoy Him as He truly is, and not in some lower and false misrepresentation of Him.

Behind the second commandment and what undergirds it as so wonderful indeed is this unchanging reality that God is so big, so grand, so glorious, so magnificent, so awesome, so unique, so wonderful, so above and beyond anything or anyone you and I could ever come up with that nothing and no one in all the universe could ever be a right and real representation of Him. Thinking of this, do you see with me how this second commandment by itself should attract us to the God of the Bible and make us small and still in humble reverence and awe before Him? Any likeness at all that we come up with is always only a gross misrepresentation of Him, God Triune!

There is still something else to say of how this commandment brings out the greatness of God. It brings out God's greatness in underlining He is just so incomparable to anything or anyone, and it brings out God's greatness in having us look alone to the One Representation of God that the Lord has been pleased to give us. And here I am thinking, of course, of Jesus Christ the Lord! To make clear what I mean here, let me tell this little story I recently came across. "An Irish boy, when the teacher of the school was one day teaching his students how we are forbidden to worship any image, interrupted his teacher by saying, 'Please, sir, there is one image we ought to worship.' 'Indeed?' said the teacher, 'pray tell me, tell us, what is that?' The boy replied, 'Why, sir, we are told to worship Christ Who is according to Colossians 1:15, *the image of the invisible God*'."

This boy, dear friends, had it right! For as Paul further says in Colossians 2:9, speaking of Christ, "*for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" In and with Jesus in His Person and work we are shown

